

REMARKS

Administrative Overview

Initially, claims 1–48 were presented for examination. Claims 1, 14, 26, and 37 have been amended; claims 5, 17, 29, and 41 have been canceled. Upon entry of this paper, claims 1–4, 6–16, 18–28, 30–40 and 42–48 will be pending in this application.

The instant Office Action was mailed on May 24, 2004. The Office Action rejected claims 26, 27, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,752,109 to Gordon et al. (hereinafter “*Gordon*”); claims 1–3, 10, and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Gordon*. Claims 26–28 and 34 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,904,046 to Paschke (hereinafter “*Paschke*”); claims 1–4, 10 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Paschke*. Claims 37 and 46–48 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,631,990 to Hashizume (hereinafter “*Hashizume*”); claims 14, 15, 22–25, and 38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Hashizume*.

Additionally, claims 12 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Paschke* in view of *Hashizume*. Claims 16 and 39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Hashizume* in view of *Gordon*. Claim 40 was rejected as unpatentable over *Hashizume* in view of *Paschke*. Claims 35 and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Gordon* in view of *Hashizume*.

Claims 5–9, 17–21, 29–33, and 41–45 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were said to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The specification was objected to for informalities.

The Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections and objections and request reconsideration of the claims in light of the preceding amendments and the discussion below. Basis for the amendments to the claims may be found, for example, in originally filed claims 5, 17, 29 and 41. The Applicants submit that no new matter has been introduced by these amendments.

The Specification, as Amended, Addresses the Outstanding Objection

The specification was objected to for use of the word “accord” instead of “accordance” at page 4 and in the Abstract, and the Applicant was asked to make the same change through the specification.

As the foregoing amendments indicate, the requested change has been implemented throughout the specification where we have identified the use of the word “accord.” Accordingly, we submit that the amendments to the specification fully address the outstanding objection and request its withdrawal.

Claims 1, 14, 26 and 37, as Amended, and the Claims that Depend Therefrom are now Allowable

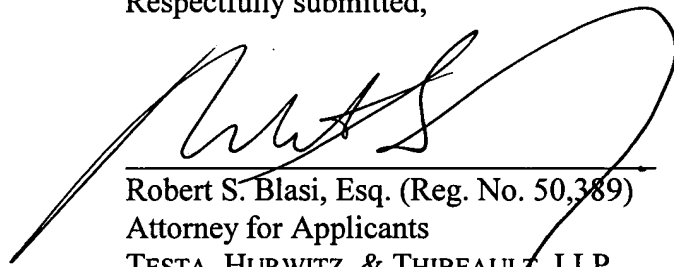
Independent claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over *Gordon* and *Paschke*, each taken individually. Independent claim 14 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over *Hashizume*. Independent claim 26 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by *Gordon* and *Paschke*, each taken individually. Independent claim 37 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by *Hashizume*.

Claims 5, 17, 29, and 41, which depend from independent claims 1, 14, 26, and 37 respectively, were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were said to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As amended, independent claims 1, 14, 26, and 37 now incorporate the limitations of dependent claims 5, 17, 29, and 41. Accordingly, we respectfully submit that independent claims 1, 14, 26, and 37 and the remaining claims that depend therefrom are now allowable.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing, we respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, we respectfully request reconsideration, the withdrawal of all grounds of rejection, and the allowance of all pending claims in due course. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conversation with the Applicant's attorney would be helpful in expediting the allowance of this application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Blasi', is written over a horizontal line.

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